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Mush excitement
The 19th annual Dogsled Derby was held at Pinestone Resort and Conference Centre this past weekend, with sledders and teams visiting from across the country. /TIM YANO staff photgrapher

How Haliburton Village Pharmacy is redefining care

ADAM FRISK
Journalist

When you step into Pharmasave Haliburton Village Pharmacy, the typical "big-box" experience of fluorescent lights, aisles of industrial cleaning products, and a lotto machine shouting "winner, gagnant!" is nowhere to be found or heard.

Instead, clients are greeted by polished concrete floors, an elegant, peaceful atmosphere, and a curated selection of products from more than 40 Canadian, mostly women-owned businesses.

"When I decided to do my own pharmacy, I knew I could make my own decisions about how I wanted to see the profession evolve under my roof," owner Lauren Wilson said in a recent interview. "But I also knew that to set myself apart with five pharmacies in town, I needed to

see LOCAL page 12

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Flu season peak passed

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

After a brutal start to the respiratory season, which saw local influenza cases soar to six times the levels recorded last year, the health unit announced that the region has finally passed its peak.

Dr. Natalie Bocking, Lakelands Public Health deputy medical officer, confirmed in a telephone interview last week that while the worst of a "unique" flu season appears to be over, the virus remains a significant presence in the community.

"Things that have made it unique are that it came earlier than what we typically would see. We have seen more activity, so more cases, more outbreaks, more people admitted to the hospital than we have certainly in more recent years," the doctor said. "The data is indicating that we have passed the peak. Often, what we see with influenza is that there's a first wave or peak of influenza A, and then sometimes we see another increase closer to March or April of influenza B."

According to the latest data from the health unit, there were 784 lab-confirmed cases of influenza reported in the Lakelands Public Health region as of January 3, a staggering increase compared to the same period last year.

However, Dr. Bocking suggested that the number of cases is likely higher.

"When we report case numbers, they're probably only a portion of the actual number of influenza cases in the community, because there would be many people that aren't tested," she said.

Laboratory testing is typically reserved for high-risk settings, such as long-term care homes, or for patients sick enough to require a visit to the emergency department or admission to the hospital.

While the season arrived earlier than in typical years, the doctor said that the data indicates the region is now on the downside of the slope.

"I think we're hoping that for this year the worst has happened and that there won't be, that really we are on the downswing," the health official said. "We're seeing fewer cases, fewer outbreaks, fewer hospital admissions, but influenza is still here. It's not gone away completely."

Dr. Bocking explained that typically, flu seasons see an initial wave of influenza A, followed by a smaller wave of influenza B in March or April. She noted that global trends suggest a significant second wave of influenza B may not materialize this year, though she warned against complacency.

The deputy medical officer said that this year's strain had evolved rapidly, noting that the annual vaccine was not a perfect match for the subtype that ended up circulating. However, the doctor stressed that the shot was still doing its job.

"The vaccine was still providing protection against needing to be admitted to hospital, against severe disease," she said.

For those who have avoided the flu so far, Dr. Bocking said the window of protection is still open.

"We know that we're going to continue to see influenza cases for the next couple of months," she said. "Thankfully, not at the same level, but the virus is still in the community."

Because the vaccine protects against three different strains, including the influenza B strain that often appears later in the spring, the health official said it remains a worthwhile precaution for the community.

Social media spins around Strong Mayor Powers

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

The recent application of Strong Mayor Powers by Minden's Mayor Bob Carter has some social media users asking questions about the process.

On Jan. 16, Carter announced that he would be vetoing eight of the 25 amendments made by council on the 2026 draft budget. Not every amendment was an addition to the budget, rather, many were suggestions to cut services. "Part of the budgeting process is matching what is needed with what we can afford," said Carter. "We have to maintain services, and it's really nice if we can enhance services along the way."

Under the regulations for Strong Mayor Powers - a legal requirement put in place by Premier Doug Ford in May of last year - municipal mayors are responsible for presenting the first round of the budget. "It's a process," said Carter. "A four-step process that is required by law. And the whole process isn't about using powers, it's about trying to decide what's best for the people of Minden."

To bring forward his initial budget, which was presented in mid-December and included a tax increase of 3.95 per cent, Carter worked closely with Minden Hills staff. "The staff are the professionals," he said. "They know what's needed in town."

Following the initial presentation of the budget, council members picked through each item line by line, to which they presented their amendments. Carter then was able to counter amendments, where he selected eight to veto in an effort to keep the tax rate low. From the vetoing point of Jan. 16, council then has 15 days to decide if they want to override the veto, with the final date for discussion landing on Jan. 29.

If council overrides the vetoes, the budget will be passed with all amendments in place, resulting in a tax increase of over five per cent. "I'll be disappointed if that's what happens," said Carter. "But all I can try to do is what's best for the people. It is a democracy."

When Carter announced his vetoes on the amendments, social media users were quick to jump on his decision. "This is a dangerous day for our municipality," read one comment. "We did not vote for a king."

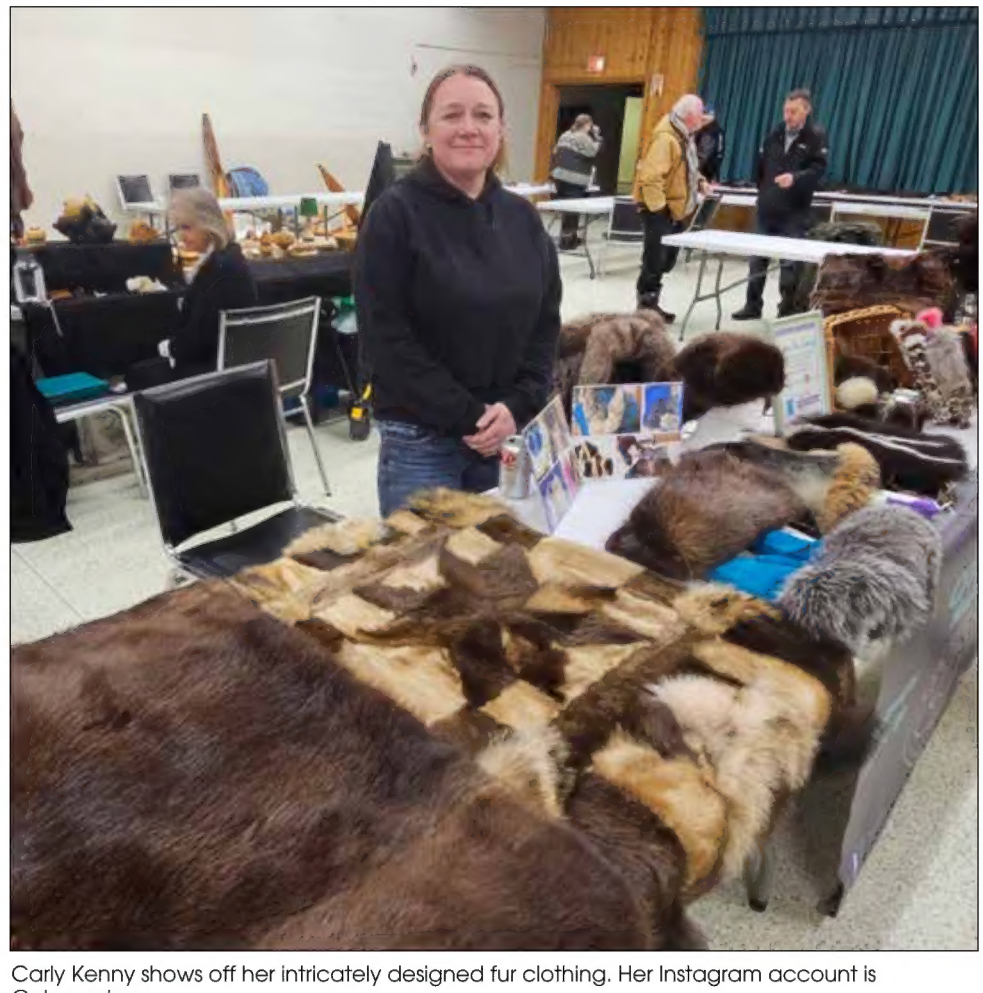
As required by law, each veto Carter presented includes detailed reasoning, which can be accessed and read via the Township of Minden Hills' website. Carter noted that he made an effort to not cut things from the budget that staff had requested, rather, his vetoes were made in an effort to support staff needs. The sole item that Carter cut, was adding $50,000 to the tax levy in an effort to revitalize the property with the former fire hall off Milne Street. "That needs a complete study," he said. "And there's no one on staff who recommended that be changed this year."

Carter said that despite backlash, he will continue to try to put the people of Minden first. "This isn't a choice," he said, regarding the Strong Mayor Powers, "this is the law. And I don't sit back and enjoy the power. But I never have and I never will govern by social media."

Fur tales

Brandon Sutcliffe and his daughter Ava guess the weight of a beaver at the Annual Fur Harvesters Workshop held in Wilberforce on Saturday, Jan. 24. /THOMAS SMITH staff

Bill Trudeau calls a winning raffle number.



Carly Kenny shows off her intricately designed fur clothing. Her Instagram account is @cjs_sewing

Folks Festival aims to keep music accessible for all

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

Haliburton's Lizzy Clarke is a vocal coach and lifelong singer, who has stepped into the role of coordinating the upcoming February Folk Festival. /FILE

"Folk" can mean many different things. It's a general term for describing groups of people. It can be the concept of relating to the traditional art or culture of a community or nation. Sometimes it relates to music that shares the stories of days gone by, or hopes for the future.

And sometimes, it can mean all of the above.

That's the idea around the County of Haliburton's annual February Folk Festival.

Now in its second year, the idea stemmed from the County's involvement around Hike Haliburton, winter edition. The event had received some funding to grow the hiking fest, and organizers wanted to really put it on the map. "We thought, how can we grow this winter festival?'" said Angelica Ingram, the manager of tourism for the County of Haliburton. "We were unable to add more volunteers and more hikes, so we came up with adding a musical element."

Ingram was quick to direct credit to Eric Casper, the tourism coordinator for the County. As a musician himself, Casper suggested partnering with the Folk Society, and creating an event that collaborates with music and recreation.

But no one anticipated the success of the first February Folk Festival. "It's become its own festival in its own right, and that's exactly what we want," said Ingram. "It's become a real community event, and everyone has come on board."

While the County still holds the reins for the event itself, they have collaborated with a number of businesses, sponsors, organizations, and individuals who have given the 2026 month-long festival a whole new set of wings.

One of the coordinators of the festival is the Folk Society's own Lizzy Clarke. Clarke is a self-defined "newbie" to the area, and as a vocal coach and lifelong musician at heart, she sees the value in creating a festival that includes everyone; no matter the age, experience, or economic bracket.

"Keeping music affordable is so important," said Clarke. "All the pop-ups are free, so everyone who wants to be there, can be there."

"We want this to be a festival that everyone feels they can go to," echoed Ingram. "We wanted all the shows to either be very accessible, or completely free."

And there is no shortage of shows. With something scheduled nearly every day over the course of February - from full multi-musician bands to solo acts and songwriting circles - there is something for everyone. "I know it's called Folk Fest, but really, there's a bit of everything," said Ingram. "It wasn't difficult to find performers, because we already have so many great musicians here."

The full lineup of the month-long festival can be found on the County's website, at www.myhaliburtonhighlands.com.

OLD TIME WINTER SQUARE DANCE

Presented by: Dance Happens Here Haliburton (DH3) with Hike Haliburton – Winter Edition & February Folk Festival

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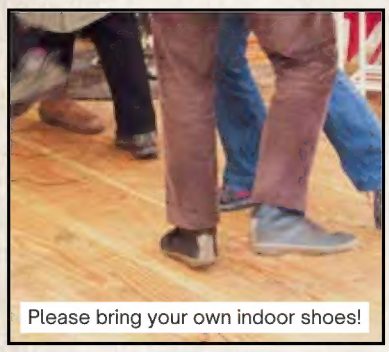

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Dogsled Derby days

Haliburton county's 19th annual Dogsled Derby was held this past weekend at the Pinestone Resort and Conference Centre. Teams from across Canada participated in the frigid festivities, with onlookers braving the cold snap to cheer them on. The event was coordinated by Winterdance Dogsled Tours, who have been involved for nearly two decades. /TIM YANO staff photographer

The new future location for Haliburton Gymnastics has been secured down Industrial Park Road. /submitted

Haliburton Gymnastics maps out next steps

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

"If you build it, they will come."

That's the mindset of Kathy Judson as she shared the iconic *Field of Dreams* quote, in reference to her newest project: a gymnastics gym in the heart of Haliburton. "It just feels right."

Judson is a lifelong athlete, coach, and a mother of two active girls. Before moving to Haliburton County, she was the owner of two separate gyms, and has kickstarted sports programs in corners all over the world, including the Haliburton Grassroots Athletics for women and youth in the area.

So when she saw a gap in what Haliburton County was able to offer in terms of programming around the sport her kids love, she saw an opportunity. "This is part of my calling," she said. "And if we build it, all the pieces will fall into place."

After years of leaving the county to shuttle her kids to training and competitions, Judson noted that not only was the drive getting tiresome, but her economic impact was leaving the community. "I was doing my grocery shopping, buying gifts for upcoming birthday parties, all while the girls were in gymnastics," she said. "Having our Haliburton families stay in Haliburton is so beneficial to the economy."

Judson launched a Haliburton Gymnastics page on Facebook, and received an outpouring of local support around the initiative. "It just goes to show that there are people here who want this," she said. "The community really does come together when you need some help. That's why I love it here."

Judson recently secured a loan from the Haliburton County Development Corporation for $100,000 towards startup costs. This has allowed Judson to move forward with the lease of a building on Industrial Park Road.

The next step is equipment: a stage where Judson is making sure she's thorough and well-read on the requirements. "I want to make sure that no corners are cut there," she said. "So there are still some question marks around that."

While the programming will be largely focused on Haliburton County youth, there will be opportunities for adults, seniors, and pre-school classes to utilize the space, as well. Judson intends to offer additional activities and programs, tapping into her background as a certified fitness trainer and yoga instructor. "There are a lot of people who would benefit from (the space)," said Judson.

The development is in the very preliminary stages, and while Judson is wary of adding a firm timeline to the process, is hoping for success by this summer. For further updates on the initiative or for ways to get involved, visit Haliburton Gymnastics on Facebook. Judson is also seeking active supporters interested in sponsoring this community endeavour, and suggested reaching out to Haliburtongymnastics@gmail.com for more information. "It feels right, doors have opened and I've followed them," said Judson. "It's time for Haliburton to have this."

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JENNIFER MCEATHRON, General Manager and Sales
jenniferm@haliburtonpress.com

EMILY STONEHOUSE, Managing Editor
emily@haliburtonpress.com

THOMAS SMITH, Journalist
thomas@haliburtonpress.com

ADAM FRISK, Journalist
adam@haliburtonpress.com

KAREN LONDON, Production Co-ordinator
karen@haliburtonpress.com

STACEY POTALIVO, Production

LAURA SMITH, Sales
laura@haliburtonpress.com

PAUL BANELOPOULOS, Sales
paul@haliburtonpress.com

AMANDA GONYEA
Inside Sales
classifieds@haliburtonpress.com

CIRCULATION
subscriptions@haliburtonpress.com

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Power

DYSART PASSED their budget earlier this year by following a standard status quo pattern. Very few feathers were ruffled. If you blinked, you may have even missed it on the agenda altogether.

That's a stark contrast to the way Minden has rolled out their 2026 season. I've lost count of how many meetings have been dedicated to the conversations, and how many stories have swirled around social media in regards to the process.

When I was a department head with the Township of Minden Hills, not that long ago, the budgeting process was completely different. Senior staffers would take their proposed budgets to a live council meeting, where, line by line, their initiatives would be sifted through in real time, and spliced and divvied until a palatable number was achieved. The process would take staff and council well into the late winter, early spring. And no one was ever happy about it. Everyone grumbled.

Editorial

Emily Stonehouse

This time around, it was different. Mayor Bob Carter worked directly with department heads, to understand their needs for the year, and, using their expertise and experience, built a budget based on those.

He presented a budget of under four per cent which highlighted those departmental needs in December. And everyone grumbled.

Council countered, proposing amendments which would increase the taxes well over five per cent. A handful of these amendments were not done with staff considerations in place.

Carter then countered that, suggesting additional support for staff, and a further decrease in the tax rate, keeping it under five per cent.

And everyone grumbled.

That leads me to believe that the grumbling around the budget has nothing to do with the tax rate itself.

Instead, it's the usage of "Strong Mayor Powers". When Doug Ford chose to give municipal mayors these 'powers', he knew exactly what he was doing: taking the target off his own back.

The term carries weight. It launches an oligarchical perception of those in positions of power: the decisions of many, made by a select few. And I get it. Many are quick to jump on anyone who takes away some semblance of their freedoms. It's a politically charged swamp that we are wading through these days.

But in reality, these superpowers carry very little weight. They also don't allow Carter to act as a lone wolf who exclusively makes every little decision for our community.

They merely change the process. Even with the amendments increasing the tax rate, it's likely that they will go through. If 2/3rds of council members vote to pass them, then they're set in stone, and the whole process that Carter started with; working directly with department heads in an effort to lower taxes, becomes a moot point.

You will never find me supporting one person controlling many. We've all seen how that plays out, through the past and the present.

When Ford coined the term 'Strong Mayor Powers', he played on that fear. He saw how the world was sitting on edge; a palpable concern that we were on the cusp of control from those who do not have our best interests at heart.

So when Carter used his "Strong Mayor Powers" (a sharp and cutting phrase) to "veto" (another dagger of a word) a number of these amendments (good or bad), the target suddenly moved to his back.

Let's take the time to learn about the reasoning. To understand the actual numbers behind these decisions, and support what's best not just for taxpayers, but for the dedicated staff who are committed to keeping this community afloat.

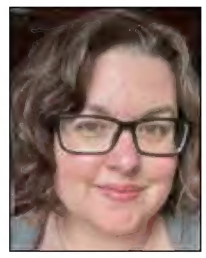
Because words matter, and what's where the real power lies.

Pleasant diversions

MY LATE grandmother loved crossword puzzles. When I lived with her during my undergrad days, she could often be found in her recliner with the newspaper, a pencil, and her crossword puzzle dictionary. We all have activities that help us unwind, and something I share with my grandmother is enjoying puzzles.

There are a plethora of word, logic, and other puzzles available online. You've probably heard of *Wordle* and others in the suite of *New York Times* games that are quite popular like *Connections, Strands, Spelling Bee,* and the like. Those are all satisfying and fun to play. But here are some other (maybe lesser known?) head scratching puzzle games that I have also enjoyed that you might too.

Humans & Technology



Erin Kernohan-Berning

Bracket City – this one was recently purchased by *The Atlantic*. It was originally created by Ben Gross who still creates the puzzles. The puzzle consists of a "this day in history" phrase with some of the words replaced by clues in nested brackets, resulting in something that resembles a crossword in paragraph form. Some of the clues verge on the cryptic crossword end of things, leaning towards witty humour. You type your answers into a text box which automatically clears the solved bracket regardless of location (so you can bounce around the puzzle if you're stumped). At the end, you are rewarded by a ranking and a historical factoid with a link to Wikipedia or another relevant source. You can also sign up for the *Bracket City* word of the day email for some vocabulary expanding fun.

Clues by Sam – created by Finnish game developer Ad Artis Oy, the game consists of a 4x5 grid of suspects. You are presented with an initial suspect already shown as innocent and a clue to determine whether further suspects are innocents or criminals. As you correctly determine the innocence (or lack thereof) of the suspects, you reveal more clues. The trick to this puzzle is you cannot guess. If there are not enough clues to support your answer, the game will not let you rely on a 50/50 chance of being right. You can use hints if you are super stuck, and you can play puzzles over again to try and follow the logic if you had trouble the first time.

CATfishing: the Wikipedia guessing game – This daily puzzle was developed in 2006 with the original concept credited to Sumana Harihareswara and developed into a game by Kevan Davis. The name of the game predates the current meaning of "catfishing" (using a fake persona online to deceive someone) and is a portmanteau of "category" and "fishing". You are presented with 10 questions consisting of the categories that a Wikipedia article belongs to. Your job is to guess the title of the Wikipedia article. There is some wiggle room for spelling and phraseology, and even a "close enough" button for half points. If you are a fan of general knowledge trivia, this is a fun spin on that. I regularly get low scores on this game, but find it is fun to explore the different Wikipedia articles that come up.

Waffle – a word game created by James Robinson with a grid of six intersecting five-letter words with their letters all jumbled. You solve for the words by swapping letters. You have 15 swaps to solve the whole puzzle and get bonus points if you have swaps left over. This is a great game if you like jumble-style puzzles. There is also a weekly deluxe puzzle of eight intersecting seven-letter words with 25 swaps.

The Missing Letter – from Merriam-Webster of dictionary fame, where you solve a weekly set of daily crossword puzzles. Each clue starts with a letter of the alphabet, and at the end of each puzzle a letter remains. At the end of the week, unscramble the missing letters to solve a mystery word. If you like crossword puzzles and jumbles, this is the best of both worlds. Merriam-Webster also hosts a *Wordle* clone called *Quordle*, which consists of four *Wordle*-style puzzles solved simultaneously.

All of these games are free to play (ad supported), and don't require you to sign up for an account. They are a pleasant diversion that gives your brain something to chew on, and all are easily found via your preferred search engine. Of course, you also don't need to go online to search for puzzle games at all – there are still many puzzle books available to buy at your favourite book retailer if you prefer a pencil and paper.

points of view

Less is more

Loon Tales

Steve Galea

I HAVE had an Instagram account for several years now. I'm not proud of this.

In my defense, I rarely post much on it anymore. Having said that, I've recently noticed what I consider to be an alarming trend. That being, the less I post, the more followers I seem to get.

Just to be clear, followers are not important to me. In fact, if I was actually being followed by that many people, I would try to lose them in a really cool car chase. I'd probably do this by speeding up through a red light and then making a hard turn down the first narrow alley on the right. I'd knock over several garbage cans dramatically in the process, and then fish-tail into an underground garage. Then, after noticing that they were still on my tail, I'd drive recklessly at full speed to the top level. Once there I would do a Tokyo drift and drive back down to the road, waving at them as I pass.

Then, with pedal to the metal, I would make a hard left and zigzag through rush hour traffic, squealing my brakes a lot until I arrived at a drawbridge that is just being raised over a river. Naturally, I'd hit the gas and jump the ever-widening gap with my car mere seconds before my followers were about to catch up to me.

Not that I've given this much thought.

But forget all that.

The point is when you discover a trend like this, you need to ask yourself what the universe is trying to tell you. And, after giving it some serious thought, I have now realized that my pathway to success in life is to become what people used to call the strong, silent type.

I'm letting you all know this now, so you don't get offended when I just look at you with steely eyes and nod or shake my head, or pause for an uncomfortably long period of time when you ask me questions like, "Would you like mayo on that?"

That will just be me being all strong and silent.

And while it might be off-putting at first, or perhaps even appear to be a sign that I have suffered some sudden medical affliction, I think, if you are like my Instagram followers, at least, you will soon come to appreciate this quality.

Sure, it will entail me using words like, "Yup" or "Nope", and others that are one syllable or less. And, yes, I will miss using fancy words such as "sarsaparilla" and "marmalade." But this is the price a person must pay these days to be liked, apparently.

Hopefully, this will be the last long-winded column that I ever write too.

You see, I am currently entering into negotiations to get this column's word count reduced to three words – although in a very large font. This will create a truly quick read and make editing a breeze.

If my Instagram experience is any indication, I suspect these measures will increase this column's popularity and probably get me a couple of syndication deals. I'll likely be mobbed by people who appreciate brevity and us strong, silent types.

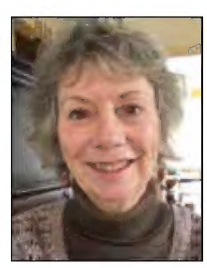
Maybe that even applies to you.

If that's the case, don't follow me though. Not until they build a parking garage and drawbridge around here.

pic *of the* past

Haliburton Bantams, 1976-1977. Top row, left to right: Scott Welch, Ken Espie, Stewart Hogg, Phil Greenwall, Jamie Mckay, Martin Robachard. Front row, left to right: Paul Madden, Peter Scheffee, Robbie Abbs, Darren McInnes, Windy Dodd, Alan Espie. /submitted by Ken Espie

Snow



Our road Down

Sharon Lynch

IT WAS the bright light that woke Monika. When you over-sleep you can expect a brighter bedroom, she thought as she rose from the warm sheets. Unfortunately it wasn't the hour that made her room so bright – it was all the snow outside her window. In fact there were few landmarks when she looked through the curtains. Instead a curling, swirling white planet was all that remained of her driveway, shrubs and most of the garage.

Her aching back groaned as she thought of what lay ahead. Yet another day of shovelling and probably more than once. Neighbour Jim would be around with his snowblower, for which Monika was very grateful, of course. He would be paid in butter tarts. But she still had two sets of steps, a raised deck and around the birdfeeders with which to contend. And the wind didn't hesitate to try to undo her work the minute she turned her back.

Sighing over her first cup of coffee, she thought of those childhood snow days in the city. That snow was different. Heavy and damp made for great snowmen and snow forts. After their construction work, Monika and her brothers would come back inside covered in small white balls that stuck to their snowsuits like burrs on a dog. These had to be pried off before clothes were set on top of the radiators in the hall to dry. Mitts were like dishcloths. Hats the same. Their mother warmed them up with a tomato soup and grilled cheese lunch before, totally exhausted by their efforts, they napped while everything dried out. Then – back outside for more creative construction.

Now she paused between bites of her toast to note an especially determined wind whipping the birdfeeders around. Even the little feathered critters were taking cover. She asked herself if there was any point shovelling when the wind would frustrate her efforts. But of course she couldn't wait for the snow to stop because there was already a huge amount outside her door.

However it wasn't all bad. Monika took a certain amount of pride in being a 'hearty Canadian' and in truth, she loved the winter. She had learned years before that she couldn't fight the weather so she had determined to embrace it. Snowmobiling across a lake's white expanse, snowshoeing through hushed woodlands or simply walking in brilliant, sparkling sunshine were pleasures not everyone could enjoy. But she could.

A long time ago she had stood looking at her grandparents' farm fields after the first snowfall of the season. The stubble was only partly covered in white and so was useless for any winter activity until more snow had accumulated. No sliding down the hill behind the house. No snowmen or forts. How impatient she had been for the skies to open up.

The phone rang. It was Jim to say he'd be over in about an hour. Now her decision was between starting the butter tarts or grabbing the shovel. She decided to flip a coin.

Highlands Summer Festival call for auditions

Calling all theatre fans! Have you dreamed of being on the stage? Now is your chance?

This year's lineup includes *Anne of Green Gables, the Musical, Too Many Cooks,* and *Doris and Ivy in the Home.* There are roles for all ages and experience levels.

Auditions for the three plays presented this summer will be offered this coming weekend at St. George's Anglican Church in Haliburton.

To access the audition package, visit www.highlandssummerfestival.on.ca for more information.

"Some of our best surprises are people who have not ever been on the stage before." - Melissa Stephens, Executive Producer, HSF

Looking forward to seeing you.

Submitted

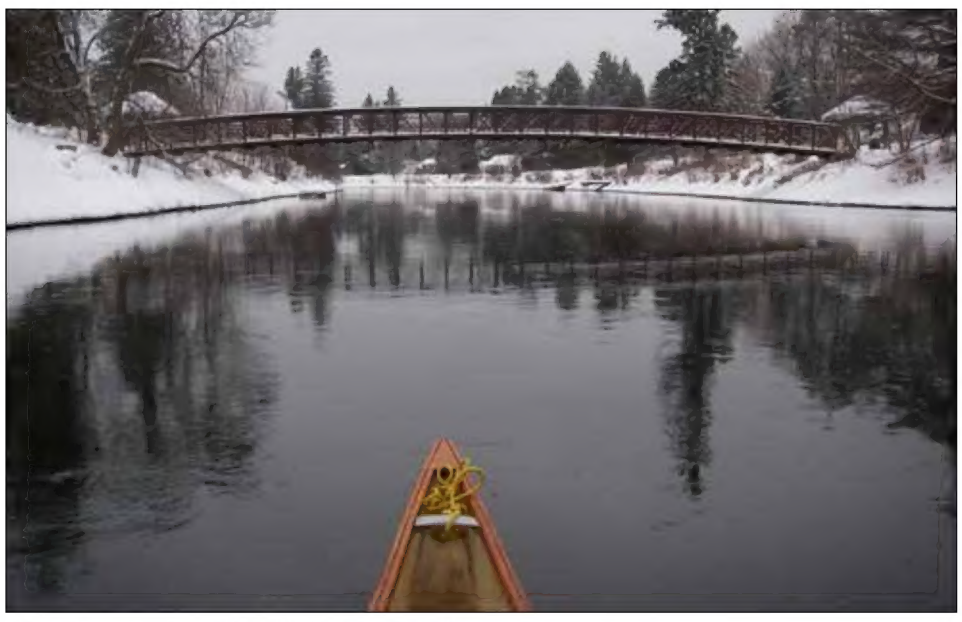
letters to the editor

Basic income needed

To the Editor,

I was glad to read that businesses in Haliburton had a busy holiday season (Adam Frisk, *Echo*, January 13). The last sentence in his article, "Businesses are now bracing for the inevitable post-holiday quiet, a standard part of the business cycle." Prompts me to think about the seasonal staff who may be bracing for a period of unemployment. It also reinforces my conviction that a guaranteed basic income would help workers whose employment depends on the business cycle.

Carolynn Coburn,
Haliburton



Minden by canoe. /submitted by John Gibb

Book of the Week

HALIBURTON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

After a devastating storm, Cora sets out with her nine-year-old daughter, Maia, to register the birth of her son. Her husband Gordon, respected in the community but controlling at home, expects her to follow a family tradition and name the baby after him. When the moment arrives, Cora hesitates, and a single choice changes everything.

Spanning thirty-five years, The Names traces three alternate lives shaped by Cora's last-minute decision about what to name her son. It is a moving meditation on what-ifs, love, resilience, and the endless possibilities that a single choice can create.

The Names by Florence Knapp is available at the Haliburton County Public Library as a book or Book Club Set. Visit haliburtonlibrary.ca to place a hold or learn more.

Medication Safety; too many pills workshop

To kick off 2026, Aging Together As Community invites you to join us at our upcoming event supported by Haliburton County Seniors Active Living Centre.

Do you want to learn more about the expanded role of pharmacists?

Do you have questions and concerns about your medications? Join us for *Medication safety, too many pills*

Tuesday, Feb. 10, 12:30-3:30 p.m., Haliburton Legion

Speakers: Dr. Barbara Clive, GAIN (Geriatric Assessment Intervention Network), Sabnam Vora, Pharmacist, Shoppers Drug Mart, Khushboo Patel, Registered Technician, Shoppers DM, Tina Gilbert, Registered Practical Nurse, In-Home Care.

Lunch is provided. Donations appreciated.

Please register by February 4.

We would appreciate your help to set up and tear down.

Please contact us for details.

To register please email agingtogetherhc@gmail.com or call 705-879-9412.

Submitted

A taste of Scotland

The annual Robbie Burns Night was held at the Haliburton Legion this past Saturday. With live music, dancing, poetry, and Scottish food and drinks, it was a busy night for the sold-out crowd, and offered a sense of warmth on the very cold evening. /ADAM FRISK staff

County seeing strong winter tourism start

ADAM FRISK

Journalist

If the bustling sidewalks and packed parking lots over the holidays were any indication, Haliburton County is experiencing a strong start to the winter tourism season.

While it's too early to have any hard data, the County of Haliburton's manager of tourism shared anecdotal evidence from local business owners that points to a significant boom, ignited by an early arrival of snow and a "winter mindset" that has gripped the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

"The early snow we got in November never really went away," Angelica Ingram said in a recent telephone interview. "We went into December with snow, we had a snowy Christmas, and the whole holiday break seemed to be very busy. It was probably one of the busiest holiday breaks I've ever seen in the community."

Ingram described the scene between Boxing Day and New Year's Eve as "good mayhem," with restaurants booked solid and hotels filled.

What has helped the early tourism boom is the weather three hours south of the county. When the GTA sees snow, it triggers a "winter spirit" that drives day trips and weekend getaways to the Highlands, Ingram noted.

"Sometimes, for the Toronto area, it doesn't matter if we have snow. If they don't have snow, they're not in that winter mindset," she said. "So when they have winter too, when they have snow, then everybody kind of gets into that, 'Oh, let's go do some winter activity' mindset.

The County of Haliburton is also working hard behind the scenes to ensure that Haliburton is top of mind for daytrippers and weekend warriors.

"The County continues to promote winter tourism through a variety of marketing partnerships and campaigns, highlighting all the great experiences the region has to offer," Ingram said. " In February, we are working with Destination Ontario on an exciting project that will help further cross-promote the area by showcasing its beauty in the winter season."

The tourism boost is being felt by operators across the county, with Sir Sam's Ski/Ride a strong start to the season. Despite a brief closure two weeks ago due to a mild spell, snowmobile trails have reopened, and the community was flooded with riders last weekend.

As January winds down, several major events are expected to keep the momentum going through the "heart" of winter, including Minden ice racing, Hike Haliburton, and the Dorset Snowball Winter Carnival. For those looking to stay warm, the February Folk Fest provides a "weather-proof" attraction for visitors, featuring live music across the county throughout the month.

While the current outlook is cold and snowy, the tourism department is already preparing for the inevitable spring "wind down" following March Break.

As the County enters what locals call "mud season," the focus will shift from outdoor sports and activities to culinary and wellness offerings, Ingram said. Many operators use the quiet weeks in April and May to rest and renovate before the summer rush.

"For a lot of our businesses, they take spring as a time to sort of reset and rest before the busyness of summer," she said. "Some might do a shutdown to do some renovations or improvements, or just give their staff a break before May comes and everything really ramps up."

But for now, the message to residents and visitors alike is clear: the snow is here, the trails are open, and the county is open for business.

Scottish celebrations

Hosted by the Haliburton Highlanders Pipes and Drums Band, the annual Robbie Burns Night on Jan. 24 at the Haliburton Legion was a sold out success for the community. Pictured, bagpipe music and Scottish Country dancing had the whole crowd on their feet. /ADAM FRISK staff

Russ Wunker holds a snowshoe that he believes was created by an Ojibwe artist. Wunker presented his talk on the Tales of Miners' Bay at the Fish Hatchery on Wednesday January 14. Russ' talk discussed the history of tourism in Miner's Bay, artifacts that he has found, and its believed Indigenous roots. /THOMAS SMITH staff

Russ Wunker's Miners' Bay

THOMAS SMITH

Journalist

A famous figure to yard salers of Haliburton County, Russ Wunker took to the stage at the Fish Hatchery on Wednesday, Jan. 14 to speak on the history of Miners' Bay and its namesake.

The talk was presented as part of this year's Telling Our Stories Speaker Series.

A long life lived, Wunker opened his presentation with a local connection to Sinc Nesbitt. Wunker says that before Nesbitt passed, he told him that he was his only failure in politics.

"He had nominated me for a provincial nomination and I didn't win it. He always maintained that the reason I didn't win it was three-fold. Number one, my mother decided to go to Toronto to have me there and I only came to Haliburton when I was five years old. Number two, my mother, who had started vacationing in Miners' Bay when she was three months old in 1920, was a Toronto girl. My father, despite the fact that he served in the Canadian army in World War 2, was a failure, as he was American."

Throughout Wunker's life, he visited the leader of Zambia, worked with astronaut James Irwin, and visited Ukraine, Russia, and Poland.

"It's been said that some of us, more than others, are born with an innate sense of history and the lingering poetry of time and space," said Wunker. "We, more than others, know that we can never repay our debt to the past nor neglect our obligation to the future. Without acceptance of the former, there is little hope for the latter."

The first visitors to Miners' Bay were Indigenous people.

"In a sense, they were tourists as well. Very few [Indigenous] settlements have been found in Hard Rock Country," he said.

Wunker says that little evidence of settlement remains between Coboconk and Norland.

"Campsites that indicate shorter visits are scattered across the Canadian Shield, including Haliburton County," he said. "Ojibwe, Algonquin, and Mississauga Peoples all used this region for hunting, fishing, and trapping, and sugaring in the spring. Rumors of mineral exploration in the area persisted and in the 1850s, a reference was made to a mine in Miners' Bay. The several exploration parties that went through the Gull and made accounts had reported that there was not much good land for farming."

While not appropriate for agricultural advancements, the land seemed valuable for mining.

By 1857, there were shantytowns throughout Lutterworth Township. In 1881, John Galway was one of the first settlers in the area who tried to encourage tourism by running the first sawmill, general store, and became the first postmaster at Miners' Bay. Soon after a schoolhouse and Baptist Church were built.

"I don't recall when I was first made aware of the story of the Miners' Bay silver mine. It was part of the general knowledge base that I had growing up. Often visitors asked about the etymology of the name Miners' Bay."

In the 1950s, Wunker's grandfather would conduct talks while on walks. Wunker recalls that on one occasion, he recalled a silver mine near a cabin around Gull Lake. His grandfather was the one to tell him that two Indigenous Chiefs came to Miners' Bay around 1909 to look for a lost mine.

Later in his presentation, Wunker says that one of the first white settlers of Miners' Bay recorded the two men's names as Jacob Henry and Chief Robert Sawyer.

"They were both armed with oral traditions from their tribe and a map made from deerhide," he said.

Wunker's grandfather told him that two men said that the mine was located "at Miners' Bay, between three lakes, where the water runs under the rocks."

To support this, Wunker says that several people reported seeing the map in 1909. To pay for their search for the mine, the two men made baskets and possibly snowshoes to sell.

Wunker then went on to say that there are two theories as to how the silver mine became lost. The first is that the British sent troops to seize the mine and so the mine was hidden. The second theory is that it collapsed when an earthquake occurred and forest fire blazed through the area.

Wunker finds it highly unlikely that no one would share the location of a prolific silver mine.

"In February of 1910, one of the two Chiefs perished on Gull Lake while going to Minden for supplies and the search was terminated," he said.

At one time, Wunker was contacted by the Chief of the Chippewas of Rama First Nation asking for more information on the mine, which Wunker could not provide. However, there are oral histories that speak of the mine, with a record to the Commissioner of Crown Lands saying that Indigenous Peoples have a tradition of a very valuable mine of lead and silver in the proximity of Miners' Bay.

"Minerals and valuable specimens were easily obtained by the fur traders," he said.

The report also says that the source of the minerals remains unknown and that it could have been hidden.

"In February of 1910, Jacob Henry died on Gull Lake while walking to Minden for supplies," said Wunker.

Later, Henry's body was returned to the Chippewas of Rama First Nation. Wunker explained that although Miners' Bay had a consistent general store, in 1910, the store was temporarily closed, forcing Henry a long trek to Minden for supplies.

Previously, there was a stone located on the property of what is now Kilcoo Camp acknowledging Henry's death date. In the past few decades it has been defaced and changed and is now contradictory to its original intent.

Later in life, Wunker visited Chief Stinson to ask about the oral histories surrounding the mine at Miners' Bay.

"He never really answered me or acknowledged my presence. I turned to leave, but I stopped as he started to speak. I had the distinct impression that my presence had not registered with him, but my question had prompted a flow of memories, he continued to puff on his pipe."

"It was a long time ago. I was very young. They had a map, they were looking for gold. I hadn't thought about this for many years. One of them died, he was a great chief. We brought his body back and we buried him on the island," said Wunker, repeating Chief Stinson's words, while adding in onomatopoeia of his pipe.

Chief Stinson passed away a few months after Wunker's visit and was buried on Chief's Island.

To accompany Wunker's talk, he brought a selection of objects from Miners' Bay history. One of the objects included a pair of snowshoes with connections to Miners' Bay. Other items included newspapers from the early years of Miners' Bay and a basket made with sweetgrass and porcupine quills from an Indigenous artist.

"These snowshoes were made by Rama people in 1910, it all ties in together," said Wunker.

Wunker believes that the silver mine at Miners' Bay must have collapsed around the first half of the 1800s. Situated on the Central Metasedimentary faultline, the New Madrid Earthquakes from 1811-1812 would have been felt around Miners' Bay.

"The entire Atlantic seaboard reported shocks," said Wunker. "The total series of shocks remains the largest and most severe on record."

Wunker says that burnt stumps and dislocated terrain around Miners' Bay are evidence of geological disturbance and forest fires in the area.

"All these facts, anecdotes, and observations create a storyline. My theory is not provable, but much of history is a

see HISTORY page 11

History of Miners' Bay comes alive with local presentation

from page 10

mixture of fact, conjecture, speculation and interpretation. The story of the Miners' Bay silver mine follows this pattern."

Following a break, Wunker dove into the history of tourism in Miners' Bay.

In 1914, the Bayview Hotel was built in Miners' Bay.

"The elevation of the Haliburton Highlands became a selling point for local tourism," he said.

Families began to visit the area seasonally, with a large influx of visitors to avoid the Spanish Flu in 1918.

Siding from a building at Miners' Bay shows pencilled notes from tourists from 1914-1917 with inscriptions talking about attending church on Easter Sunday and battles in Europe during World War I.

In 1927, the Miners' Bay Property Owners Association formed as one of the earliest cottage associations in the province. The association remains active today, with descendents of early visitors continuing to cottage on the lake.

The Wunker family came to Miners' Bay from Cincinnati in 1938, with his ancestors taking over the Miners' Bay Lodge. Famously, a 23-pound lake trout hangs in the lodge to this day, a reminder of the demand for fishing and the ruggedness of Ontario's landscape in the early half of the 20th century.

His grandfather wrote the first advertisement with the quote of "nature, at its rugged best."

During World War II, Miners' Bay Lodge advertisements reminded guests to bring their ration books, declaring that it was patriotic to take a break and enjoy their vacation at the lodge.

"Many families have gone on to join the 50 year club," he said.

After generations of the Wunker family's ownership of Miners' Bay Lodge, Wunker sold the business to a group of dedicated longtime guests.

"I think they are doing well, but going from a malevolent dictator to a committee is difficult," he said.

Wunker says that Miners' Bay Lodge, in addition to Miners' Bay Church, are all that remain of the once-thriving community, which at one time contained two resorts, two churches, a post office, store and a school.

"We all know that tourism continues to continue to prosper and property values in our area sometimes approach those of Muskoka," he said.

To preserve the local history of Miners' Bay, Wunker has written 530 historical vignettes and continues to present on local history.

Wunker finished his presentation with a variety of historical photographs and postcards from the Gull Lake and Miners' Bay area, providing stories of their connection to Miners' Bay.

If you are interested in learning more about Miners' Bay history and support Wunker's talks, please visit the Miners' Bay Church Facebook page where they continue to post schedules for historical talks and church services.

STICK IT TO HUNGER

Storm Strong

This past weekend our U15 REP Cheryl Smith REMAX and U18 REP Haliburton Timbermart teams hosted an incredible home tournament, and asked our community to rally behind the STICK IT TO HUNGER campaign! Thanks to your generosity, we proudly filled a hockey bag with food donations for the Minden Community Food Centre — and to make it even more special, the 50/50 winner donated their winnings right back to the food bank. Community, teamwork, and giving back — this is what minor hockey is all about. Huge thanks to everyone who donated, supported, and cheered these players on. Pictured here: our U15 team with Jim Wilson, Chair of the Minden Community Food Centre. /submitted by Cheryl Hamilton

Haliburton Seniors Active Living Centre

Check out this month's SALC events and activities for residents aged 55+

Board game drop-in
various dates in February
Qi Gong for Seniors
Feb. 2, 9 and 23
Seniors Stretch Class
Feb. 3, 10, 17, 24
Exercise classes with Georgia
Feb. 3, 10, 17, 24
Seniors Cooking Workshop
Feb. 3
Genealogy for Seniors
Feb. 5, 13, 18, 25
Painting Class – Feb. 5, 19
Functional Senior Fitness
Feb. 5, 19
Seniors Balance and Cardio Fitness Classes
Feb. 6, 13, 20, 27
Needle Felting
Feb. 6, 11, 12, 19, 20
Coffee House
Feb. 7
Medication Safety information lunch
Feb. 10
Senior Chair Fitness
Feb. 11, 25
Stress Management Webinar
Feb. 12
Tax Benefits and Credits for Persons with Disabilities Webinar
Feb. 24
Fire Safety & Basic First Aid and CPR
Feb. 12, 26
Chair Yoga
Feb. 26
Crafternoon
February 18

For full details, visit HaliburtonCounty.ca/SALC or pick up a calendar at a municipal office, library or Legion near you!

Haliburton County Seniors Active Living Centre (SALC)

Through this program, older adults (55+) and seniors (65+) are invited to get active, make friends, and be well!

The SALC Program is designed to provide social, cultural, learning, and recreational opportunities for seniors to stay fit, healthy and socially connected in their communities.

SALC Programming is available in Haliburton County beginning in July 2025, through collaboration between the County of Haliburton and local municipalities, the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, and multiple partners.

Funding for this program has been provided by the Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility.

Ontario

Local pharmacist plans for expanding services

from page 1

do something a little bit different."

After nearly 20 years working within a corporate pharmacy structure, Wilson reached a crossroad during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I just needed to go home at night at the end of the day and know I was working for the patient as opposed to somebody else," she said. "I felt like perhaps I was a bit limited in where I could take my practice."

After taking a six-week "breather" to contemplate leaving the profession entirely, the Haliburton-native decided to double down and do things on her own terms and in her own way.

Wilson opened her independent practice in August 2024, designing a space alongside her sister, an interior designer, that would eventually win a Pharmasave design award.

"A lot of the colours that we picked, we kind of went off, we veered off from what pharmacy standards were, in terms of they wanted the walls to be a dark grey and the floor to be wood," she said. "I pushed really hard to get certain design elements that I wanted, and then it turned out I ended up winning the pharmacy award."

Beyond the dispensing counter, the pharmacy serves as a hub for local and national entrepreneurship. Wilson has personally sourced products from over 40 Canadian vendors, with a specific focus on women-owned businesses and "clean" wellness products.

"It's kind of back to basics," she said. "People are supporting my small business while I'm supporting their small business.

Lauren Wilson has curated a space in Haliburton that feels like it's 'back to basics' for community care. /photo by Danielle Clements Photography

And it makes me feel good that I can support them."

But for Wilson, the boutique aesthetic just scratches the surface of her mission to transform the pharmacy experience from a corporate retail outlet into a vital frontline defence for Haliburton's health care system.

As the province expands prescribing authority for pharmacists, Wilson is preparing to launch dedicated clinic days, or half-days, to assess and prescribe for common conditions that typically clog up physician schedules and the emergency room.

"My goal with these clinic days is to keep people out of the emergency room," she said. "If they don't have to be there, it frees up the physician's time for more dire things. People can come in, I can assess them, and if there are red flags, I refer them. But for the most part, I can save so much time all around."

Currently, pharmacists can prescribe medications for 19 minor ailments, including urinary tract infections, cold sores, eczema, and hemorrhoids. The Ontario government is looking to expand this scope and authorize pharmacists to assess and prescribe for 14 additional minor ailments, including strep throat and shingles.

Despite the planned clinical expansion, the heart of the pharmacy remains the personal connection Wilson and her longtime "right-hand girl," Crystal Robinson, have built with their clientele, where familiarity is a medical asset.

"Ninety-nine per cent of the people who walk through my door, I know their name," the pharmacist said. "I can probably tell you their address and what meds they're taking at first glance. That comes with time and experience."

Wilson is looking toward a busy summer and further integration with her neighbours at the Hops Drive plaza, including McFadden's Meat Market and the upcoming Pet Valu.

"I wake up even now, a year and a half later, and think, 'Oh, I own my own place,'" she said with a laugh. "It's a profession where I can feel good about helping people and being a part of the community."

FEBRUARY FOLK FEST

Live music in local spaces across the Haliburton Highlands

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SONG CIRCLES • WORKSHOPS

www.febfolkfest.com

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- Dysart Library
- Haliburton Welcome Centre
- Dysart Municipal Office

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www.dysartetal.ca/funinfebruary

Sir Sam's celebrates the snow

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

Sir Sam's has been bustling all winter with the favourable snowy conditions, and are already planning for spring installations, happening soon. /FILE

"It's been a great winter," said Sir Sam's Ski and Ride general manager, Dave Bishop. "We are already seeing a better year than last year, and last year was a good year, too."

With cold temperatures and early snow, Sir Sam's has been able to maximize their season. Bishop shared that an average weekend would see 500 to 600 skiers per day. Through the week, the Eagle Lake business has reached out to neighbouring community schools, and has invited hundreds of students to travel to the site for ski lessons. "So we are seeing a lot of folks coming up who are not our regular customers," said Bishop. "That's been very positive."

With live music, seniors days, training opportunities, and kids' camps, Sir Sam's has made an effort to ensure that they are not entirely reliant on weekend traffic to stay in business. "On average, we have 74 days of operation a year," said Bishop. "We have to do it all in three months or less."

With 125 staff onsite, Bishop is mindful of ways to keep business afloat as the world heads towards a stage of climate uncertainty. That's why when it comes time for a major investment, he wants to make sure it's done properly.

Last fall, the Eagle View double chairlift was retired alongside the Red Rocket chairlift. Combined, the two lifts put in just shy of 100 years of service. "Typically, chair lifts last for 30 years, and then after that, you have to do full inspections every five years."

He noted that if a lift is properly maintained, it could survive up to 50 years, but the regular inspection comes with a starting price point of upwards of $150,000. "The cost of running a ski hill is exorbitant," said Bishop.

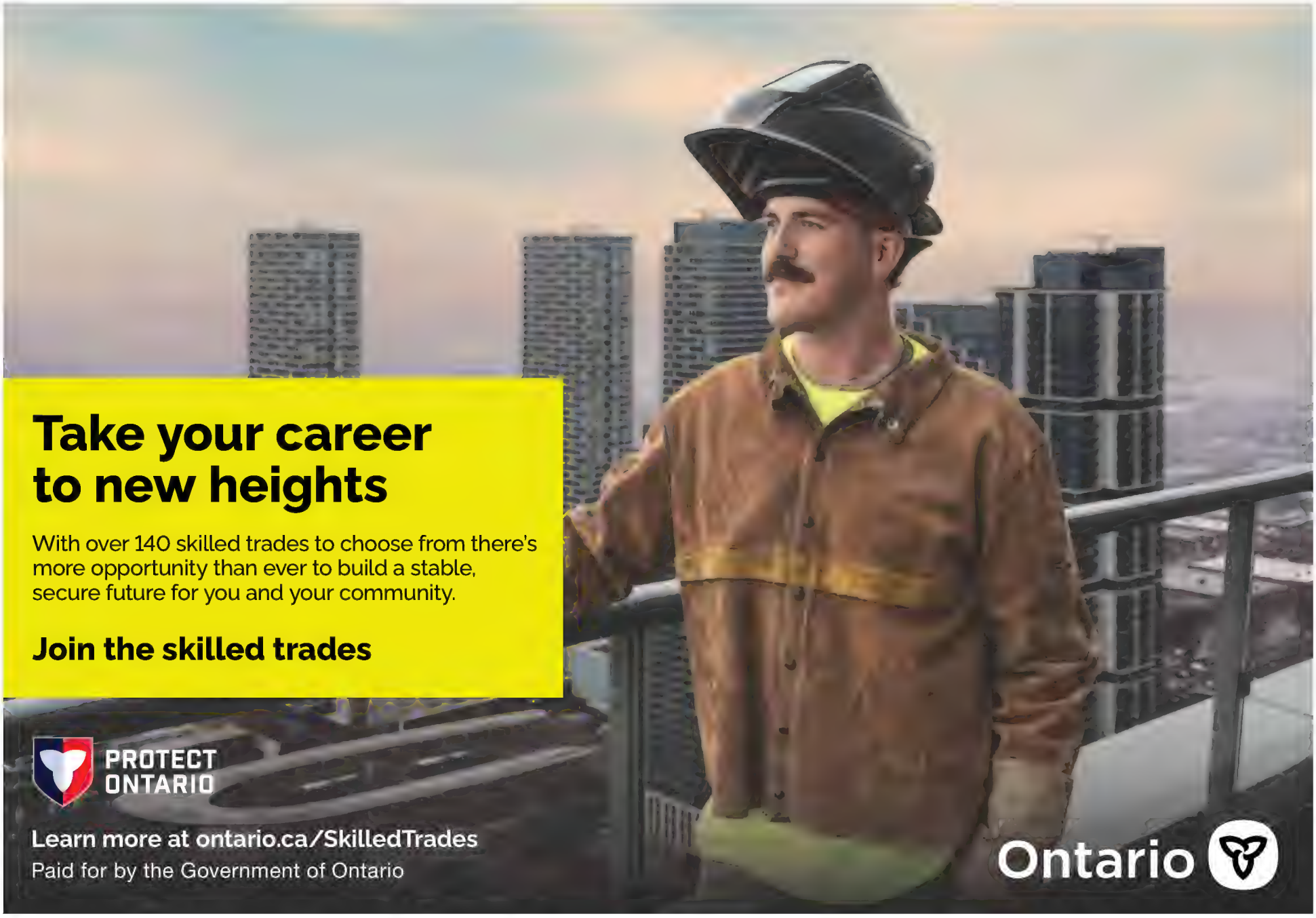
With the former lifts nearing the end of their life cycles and both coming up on inspection times, Bishop and the team at Sir Sam's knew it was time to take a leap.

A leap in the form of nearly four million dollars. The installation of the 4CLF Doppelmayr Quad Chairlift will begin in the spring of 2026, with keys for the lift officially handed over in December of this year. Bishop noted that the lift pieces are currently in production, and developers will start breaking ground as soon as the snow is off the hill.

"I'm excited," he said. "It's a big project for the hill, and a huge project for Haliburton."

With thousands of skiers flocking to the hill over the winter season, Bishop noted the economic value of bringing visitors into the county. While he shared that there were some wait times associated with the transition year as they wait for the new lift, the longest time recorded in a line on a peak day has been no more than nine minutes. "Which sounds huge for Sir Sam's, but that's a pretty standard wait time across the province," said Bishop.

The new lift will start from Sir Sam's base chalet, and travel to the top of the Kingston run. As a part of the installation process of the unit, the height of the hill will be extended nearly three metres, and a new access run will be established to the far side of the hill. "These new additions, along with other upgrades already completed, will dramatically increase lift capacity at the ski resort," read a community press release shared from the ski hill, "and enable Sir Sam's to continue its 60+ year legacy of being one of the best family ski resorts in Ontario."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October 2025 Year in Review

Haliburton Paddle Shop moves to Minden

When you walk into the Haliburton Paddle Shop, the space feels alive. Corey Pietryszyn feels it too. And as he looks around his newly-opened business on the corner of County Road 21 and Highway 35 in Minden, there's an air of possibility. As a lifelong woodworker, Pietryszyn honed in on his paddle making skills during a stint at Haliburton Forest, where he took the lead on their paddle production, nestled deep in the wild woods of the property. But when the Dock Shop opened up their location at 21 and 35, Pietryszyn and his partner, Maria Paterson, were offered an opportunity to partner with like-minded businesses and manufacturers. "Corey had this great vision," said Paterson. "He took one look around the space, and said we could make this work."

Haliburton Forest plants monumental manoomin seeds

Haliburton Forest has taken a monumental step in fostering a relationship between their company and members of the Williams Treaties First Nations.

The process started six years ago, when Haliburton Forest's General Manager Tegan Legge and Canadian Bushcraft's Caleb Musgrave discussed ways in which Haliburton Forest could better support Indigenous communities in Ontario. They decided on planting manoomin rice, and cultivating the process on the property. In October, the first harvest took place.

Canada Post strike drags on

As the Canada Post strike drags on, municipalities in the county are reminding residents that bills still need to be paid. As the mail service disruption enters its third week, townships have published notices reminding community members that bills, such as property taxes and dog tags, still need to be paid, either in person or online, despite not receiving payment notifications in the mail.

County tourism sees boom in visitors

Now in its 22nd year, Haliburton County's Hike Haliburton Festival has maintained its position as the largest hiking festival in Canada. Manager of tourism Angelica Ingram provided members of council with a tourism activity since the last tourism report in May 2025, part of the Economic Development and Tourism 2025 workplan. Amongst the highlights of the report was information surrounding Hike Haliburton. Running over the weekend of Sept. 18 to 21, the festival attracted more than 1,870 participants who took part in hikes, experiences and events across the county. The festival included 44 guided hikes and more than 85 volunteers to contribute to its success.

Minden approves veteran memorial crosswalk

In 2026, Minden Hills will be doing its part to remember our veterans. In the future, we will have a crosswalk commemorating the sacrifice and protection of our country by those who served in our armed forces. On Oct. 9 Richard Schell, 1st Vice of Minden Legion Branch 636 visited the Minden Hills council meeting. Schell had submitted a photo to council showing an example of a commemorative crosswalk depicting a soldier against a red and white striped sidewalk. The phrase 'Lest We Forget' is painted on the edge of the crossing.

Cooper Rae, 4, sits on a pumpkin during Abbey Gardens' Fall Festival on Saturday. /FILE

County Housing Summit showcases what's possible

Newfound ideas, connections, and appreciation for the collective work of the community were generated by an audience of 59 people eager to build on momentum around housing solutions at the Haliburton County Housing Summit on October 16 at the Minden Hills Community Centre. The purpose of the summit, organized by Places for People, was to celebrate how Haliburton County is making progress in creating the housing that people who live and work here need, and hear about ideas that are working in other communities.

County council moves ahead with new build

After extensive debate and a close vote, County Council made the decision to move ahead with the Land Registry Office (LRO) and administration building renovation project in August.

Staff were given direction to seek the financial implications of the project, and released a request for tender (RFT) on Sept. 24, which closed on Oct. 9. Two bids were received for this project: Perfectly Built Inc. at $1,967,478, and Icon Builders Inc.$2,240,892.

On Oct. 22, during a regular meeting of county council, Sylvin Cloutier, director of public works for the county, brought a report to council outlining the details around the bids. The original budgeted amount for the renovation project is $2,435,155, and staff recommended that they proceed with the lower bid price. Questions were presented to staff around the tendering process, but eventually gave the green light to proceed with the staff recommendations.

Visitors at Extendicare pop in for trick or treating over Halloween night. /FILE

Glecoff's Family Store celebrated 30 years in business on October. The iconic downtown Haliburton shop started in 1995, and has grown and adapted to the needs to the community over the years. Pictured, Andy and Sandra Glecoff with Amy and Clay Glecoff, the present owners. /FILE

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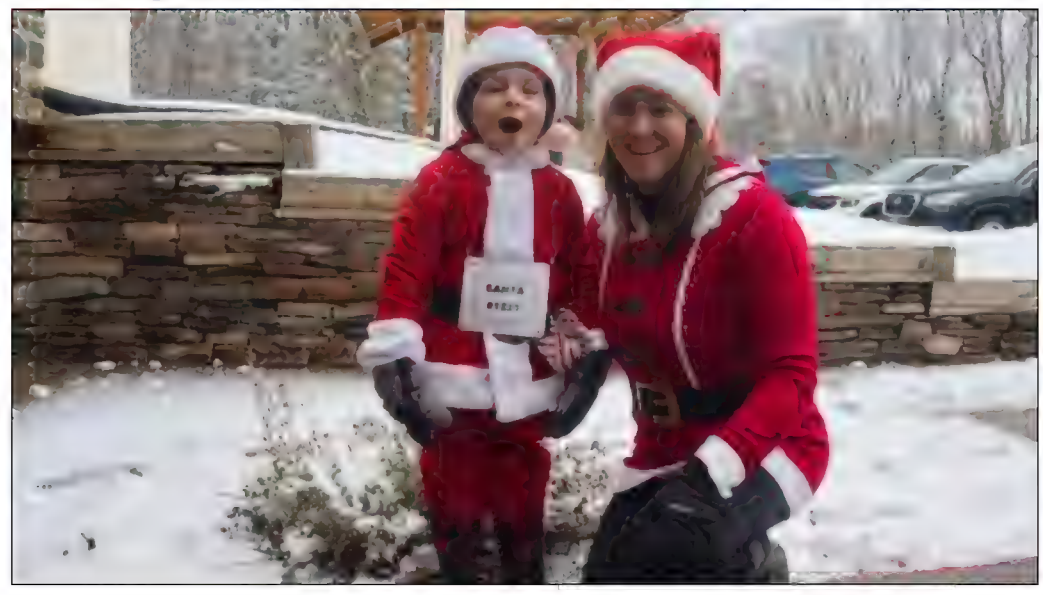
November 2025 Year in Review

The annual Remembrance Day Parade stops traffic in downtown Haliburton. /FILE



Jen Button and Joe Iles pose for a photo ahead of the 13th annual Jolly Jog at the Haliburton Highlands Museum. /FILE

Hodgson highlighted as Highlander of the Year

For Andrew Hodgson, Haliburton has always been home.

If you've spent any time in the community, it's likely that you've encountered something that Hodgson has been affiliated with. Whether it's attending the school that was named for his father, experiencing live music at the band stand in Head Lake Park, or finding your footing in a new home that he helped you secure, he's tied to the community in countless ways.

And for the most recently named Highlander of the Year by the Haliburton Highlands Chamber of Commerce at their annual awards night, it's an honour to represent his favourite place in the world.

'I'm proud': Banners honour Haliburton veterans

The main street of Haliburton Village was adorned with banners honouring local veterans in a project that was met with profound pride by some of the families of those who served.

Among those honoured is a late Second World War veteran and longtime Haliburton Legion Sergeant-at-Arms who enlisted at just 18 years old to serve his country.

His son, a current Haliburton Legion member, spoke about the profound emotion of seeing his father›s banner displayed.

"Oh man, I'm proud," Ron Draper said in an interview. "Proud to say he's my father. Proud to say that he served our country. And he was a proud veteran."

DH3's Diwali Festival of Lights added a little sparkle to November days. /FILE

Haliburton huskies head to Hollywood

One doesn't always correlate the story of *Frankenstein* with that of icy tundras and Siberian sled dogs. But true fans of the 1818 Gothic novel by Mary Shelley would know differently.

"I was surprised," said Tanya McCready, the owner of Winterdance Dogsled Tours in Haliburton, "but once I read the book, sure enough, it opens and closes in the arctic."

And this is exactly where McCready and her husband and co-owner, Hank DeBruin, come into the picture. Their huskies were selected to be featured in the blockbuster hit, opening the film for viewers. The film was seen by local audiences at the Kinmount Theatre once it opened to the public.

Beer Store confirms Haliburton closure

The Beer Store (TBS) announced that the Hops Drive location will shutter on January 11. "We are making the difficult decision to close the Haliburton Beer Store. We know this is disappointing news for staff, customers, and the local community. This decision reflects specific local circumstances – the Haliburton Beer Store will continue to serve customers and collect empties until January 11th, 2026," Ozzie Ahmed, VP Retail TBS, said in a statement. "We want to thank customers for their patronage in Haliburton."

Hal High hockey returns to the ice

Hockey and Haliburton are synonymous. It's part of our culture, part of our heritage.

Many people who grew up here recall playing hockey on the Haliburton Highlands Secondary School teams. Games were attended by community members; the bleachers filled with roaring applause and bristol board signs, cheering the local kids on.

But like many things, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, high school hockey was benched. It needed to be. The logistics were complicated, the shared spaces

Winterdance Dogsled owners smile with one of their dogs when sharing their story on the set of *Frankenstein*. /FILE

Santa Claus parades took place across the county over the month of November. /FILE

presenting too much overlap. But the local Red Hawks are ready to fly again. "Things in this school, things in the community, they're back on the upswing," said high school teacher and head coach of the hockey team, Jason Morissette.

Council greenlights 90-metre cell tower in Highlands East

Council approved a 90-metre cell tower proposal in Highlands East following a quiet public consultation process.

During the recent council meeting, elected officials voted to direct the Chief Administrative Officer and Treasurer to sign a letter of concurrence, officially approving the construction of a new telecommunications tower by Shared Tower Inc. The approved structure, identified as Site STC0796, will be a 90-metre tower located on Hadlington Road in Tory Hill.

According to the report presented to council, the new tower would significantly improve cellular service coverage in the area. The planning department confirmed that the chosen location is considered suitable for such development and is not situated adjacent to any sensitive environmental or community features.

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December 2025 Year in Review

New proclamation welcomes inclusion and respect

Mark your calendars. December 3 is now officially recognized as International Day of Persons with Disabilities in Haliburton County. During a regular meeting of county council on Nov. 26, Sue Tiffin, director of community outreach for the county, spoke on behalf of the County of Haliburton's Joint Accessibility Advisory Committee (JAAC), seeking council's endorsement and support to proclaim December 3, 2025 as International Day of Persons with Disabilities in Haliburton County.

Haliburton paramedic honoured for more than 30 years of service

For some people, 30 years on the job may feel like a lifetime, but for Haliburton County Paramedic Service Chief Mike Slatter, it felt like it went by in the blink of an eye. "There's no way I've been doing it that long, but I have," Slatter said with a laugh during a telephone interview. "I've always loved this profession." The chief is approaching 33 years on the job and was recently among 49 Ontario paramedics who received the Governor General Emergency Medical Services Exemplary Service Medal bars for providing exemplary emergency medical services for 30, 40 and 50 years.

Last patio falls in Minden

It's the end of an era on Bobcaygeon Road in Minden.

For over a century, balconies adorned the front entryways for business and lodgings along the main street. "Slowly they have disappeared," said Shawn Chamberlin, the owner of the Dominion Hotel. On Tuesday, Dec. 2, the last balcony on the main street in Minden was removed. Many would have noticed the construction at

Former owners of Molly's Bistro Bakery, Molly and Guy, celebrate the success of the sale of their building in Minden. /FILE

115 Bobcaygeon Road, at the former Grill on the Gull site, which hovers next to the river that courses through town. "This balcony dates back to the turn of the 20th century," said Chamberlin, "and provided cover from rain and snow for over 100 years."

HHHS brings in new CEO

Haliburton Highlands Health Services has welcomed a new president and CEO to the team. Effective March 30, 2026, Jack Hutchison will be stepping into the role, which has been filled by Jennifer Burns West as interim CEO since Veronica Nelson left in September, 2025.

"We are thrilled to welcome Jack to HHHS," said HHHS board chair Irene Odell in a press release shared on Friday, Dec. 5. "His deep experience in system transformation, his proven ability to lead complex operations, and his meaningful connection to this area make him an exceptional fit for our organization."

Newspaper archives tap into days gone by

The Haliburton Highlands Digital Archives (HHDA) project has been in the works for over two years. With a hard launch taking place this past fall, the online platform has stored over 7000 newspapers from our community, dating back to the year 1888; an edition of the *Minden Echo*.

The 7,000 issues equates to over 170,000 pages of scanned materials. With the scanning completed by MES Hybrid Document Systems, project coordinator Ted Brandon shared that the committee is "over the moon" with the quality of the scans. "They really did the project, not like they were a contractor, but like it was their own project," he said, noting the high-end resolution that allows the search function of the site to work on the thousands of editions. "It really allows people to narrow in on those details."

Members of the Lions Club participate in the Wilberforce Sanata Claus Parade in early December. /FILE

A pool for Christmas at Pinestone

Going into the new year, Pinestone Resort and Conference Centre are making a splash. While the current pool has been in location for over 35 years, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the heater went in it, causing the heated pool to lose its warming option. During COVID, no one was allowed to use the space as per public protocols, so the issue was not immediately resolved. "Plus there was some wear and tear to the interior," added general manager of Pinestone, Andy MacMillan. Fast forward to present day, with MacMillan in the GM seat, he thought it was best to prioritize the usage of the pool. He brought in Koho Pools, a company out of Barrie, to tackle the issues that had arisen in the space. "They were excellent to work with," he said. "Just unbelievably good." The pool is currently available for hotel guests at the establishment.

The annual Nutcracker performance at the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion dazzled crowds in December. /FILE

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Rotarians serve up some sugary treats during the free Rotary Community Christmas Party at the Legion in December. /FILE

An ice day for racing

Chilly temperatures created near-perfect conditions for local ice racers, as they took to the track for the first race of the season this past weekend. Ice racing occurs at the Minden Fairgrounds every weekend while conditions allow. Spectators are welcome to come cheer racers on. /TIM YANO staff photographer

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

S	E	N	S	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	T	Y	R	
A	P	I	O	S	■	■	■	■	■	T	O	K	E	
B	A	T	H	E	S	■	■	■	S	O	L	D		
A	R	C	A	D	E	S	■	H	A	R	A	N		
D	E	V	I	S	O	R	■	T	O	P	H	I		
K	C	U	B	E	H	T	S	E	S	S	A	P		
■	■	■	■	■	T	A	S	■	E	N	N			
■	■	■	■	M	E	R	■	A	R	I				
■	■	■	S	R	I	■	B	I	G	■	■	■		
C	U	T	T	H	E	M	U	S	T	A	R	D	■	
I	L	E	U	S	■	C	A	R	E	E	R	S	■	
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A	T	P	■	■	■	■	B	R	E	W				

SUDOKU SOLUTION

1	4	9	7	8	2	5	3	6
6	2	7	5	3	1	9	8	4
3	5	8	6	4	9	7	2	1
9	6	2	3	1	8	4	5	7
8	1	5	9	7	4	2	6	3
7	3	4	2	6	5	1	9	8
4	9	1	8	2	6	3	7	5
5	7	6	1	9	3	8	4	2
2	8	3	4	5	7	6	1	9

"If we were to get married...notice the 'if'. It's a psychological hypothesis, not a question."

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	4			8				
6	2		5					
			6	4			2	
						4		7
	1						6	
	3	4						8
					6	3		
				9	3	8	4	2
			4		7		1	

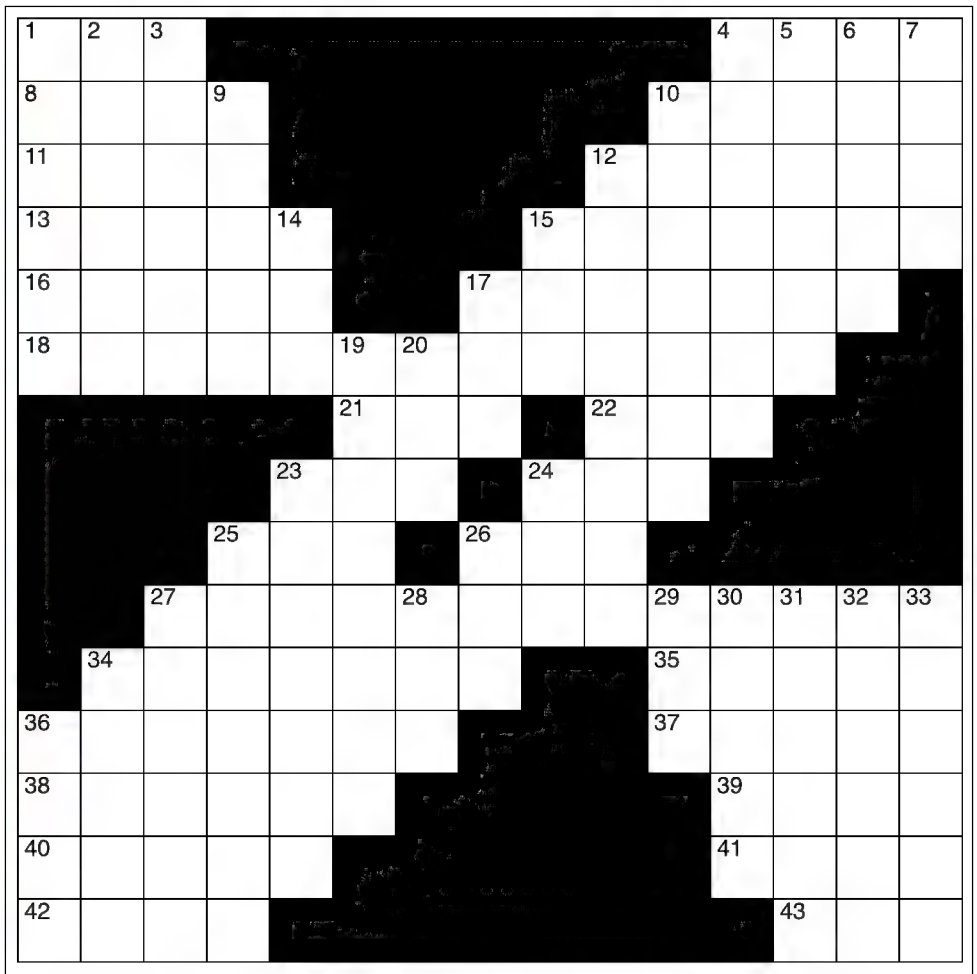
Level: Intermediate

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

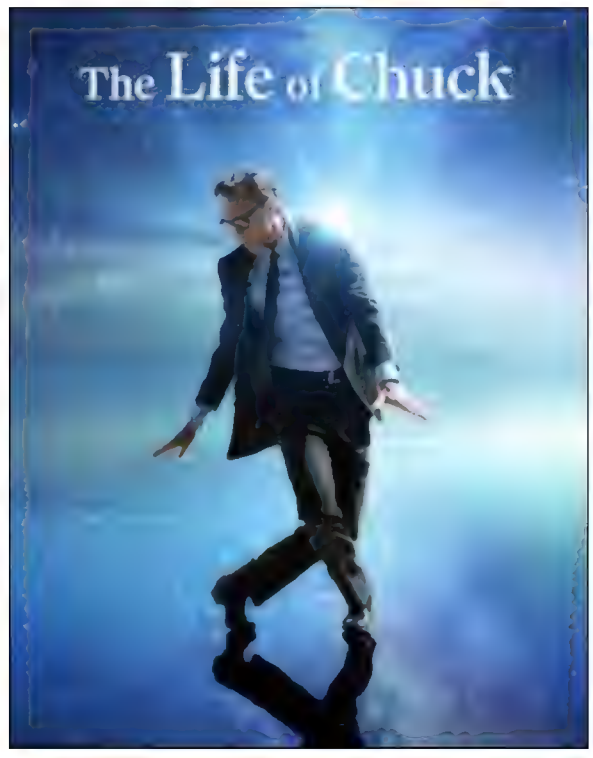
Answers on page 17



CLUES ACROSS
1. Racket sport pros
4. Make tea
8. City South of Moscow
10. Spanish bullfighting term
11. Egg-shaped
12. Could not remember
13. French modernist painter
15. Persons
16. Painful intestinal obstruction
17. Professions
18. Is up to the task
21. Wood or metal bolt
22. Tax collector
23. A way to save for the future
24. Georgia rockers
25. Midway between north and northeast
26. High schoolers' test
27. Does not accept responsibility
34. One who prepares
35. Gout-indicative deposits
36. Place to play games
37. Book of Genesis character
38. Cleans oneself
39. Unloaded for money
40. Genus of flowering plants
41. Take a puff
42. Congressmen
43. God of battle in Scandinavian mythology

CLUES DOWN
1. Type of bomb
2. South Pacific islands
3. Celestial body
4. Negotiates
5. Consider in a specified way
6. Type of group in organic chemistry
7. Buddhist monasteries
9. Inhabitant of Bering Sea island
10. Body part
12. Milestone birthday
14. Thyroid-stimulating hormone
15. More (Spanish)
17. Chicago ballplayer
19. Leaves a place
20. Cannot be found
23. One's internal body parts
24. Tell on
25. North American peoples of southwest
26. Soviet Socialist Republic
27. Extract used for jams and jellies
28. Greek goddess of the dawn
29. Old English letter
30. A way to exaggerate
31. Get up and leave
32. "Boardwalk Empire" character
33. More generous
34. Hanging cloth used as a blind
36. Ancient Greek sophist

Answers on page 17



/submitted

Friendship, connections and life journeys are on the menu

On Thursday, Feb. 12, Those Other Movies will be showing *Dancing on the Elephant*. Starring Mary Walsh and Sheila McCarthy, this film is an emotional one about two women in a nursing home who form a friendship and help each other through the bumps and challenges of this part of their life. With showings at 4:15 and 7:15 p.m. at the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion, Those Other Movies is offering a special promotion for the month of February – Bring a friend who is new to Those Other Movies and the friend can get in for free. We are excited to share the opportunity of watching great movies in a community setting with more people.

On March 12, we are excited to be screening *The Life of Chuck*. This interesting film, based on a novella by Stephen King, has been applauded by film circuit groups across the country. Told in an interesting way – in three parts, starting at the end of the main character's life, and working back to his childhood. It's the kind of film that makes you want to see it again as soon as you finish! While Stephen King is known for horror, this film is a tale of love, loss, and small things that make life worth living. It prompts reflection on some big questions like "How much does any one ordinary, individual person matter in the grand sweep of history and the cosmos?"

Tickets are just $10 (cash at the door or purchase online from www.thoseothermovies.com), thanks to our generous sponsors.

Looking ahead:

• Purchase your Doc(k) Day ticket for a full day of thought-provoking documentaries on Saturday, April 11 on our website: www.thoseothermovies.com. Line up is being finalized. We looking forward to showcasing an all – or nearly all – Canadian line up of fantastic documentaries.

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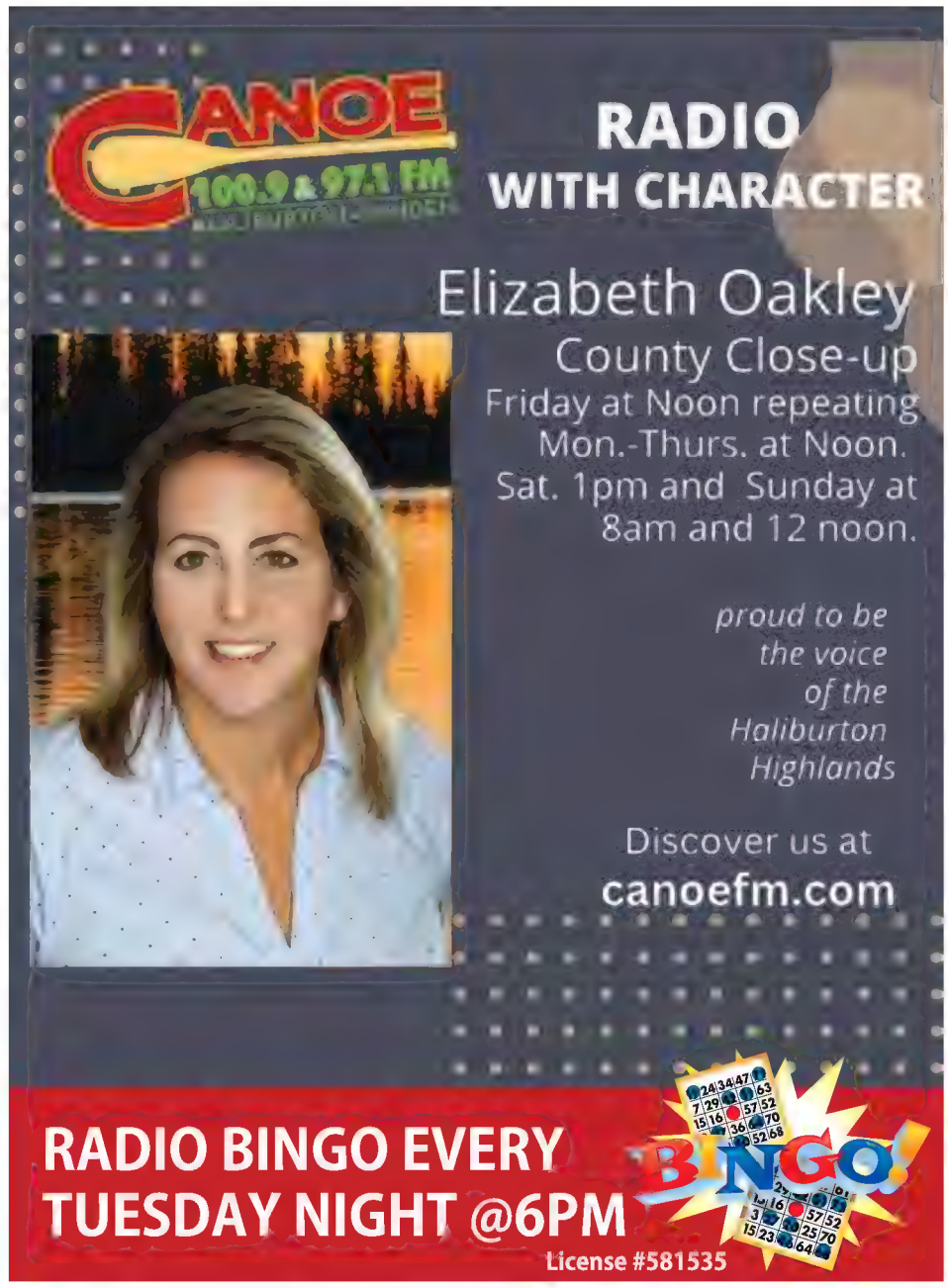

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NOTICE TO CREDITORS AND OTHERS

Notice is Hereby Given that Creditors and others, having claims against the Estate of the Deceased David C. Schieder, formerly of 1031 Grandview Lane, Minden, ON, are hereby required to send the particulars thereof to the undersigned Estate Trustee, c/o Judith Schieder, 3100 Kensington Cres., Unit 26, Courtenay, BC, V9N 8Z9 on or before March 6, 2026, after which date the estate's assets will be distributed, having regard only to the claims that have been received.
Judith Schieder, Estate Trustee

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OBITUARIES

Diana "Betty" Smith

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of Diana Smith, who left us peacefully on January 9, 2026, in her 81st year. Betty was a beloved wife, parent, grandparent, sibling, and friend, whose kindness and laughter left a mark on all who knew her.

Betty is survived by her children, Cathy and spouse Roger Warner, Cindy and spouse Cliff Gould, and Tracey and spouse John Mosey. Cherished grandmother to Ashley, Stuart, Tyler, Randi, Michael, and Troy.

Betty loved bingo, playing cards, knitting, puzzles, and going for long walks. Betty's warmth, love for life, and ability to bring joy to those around her will never be forgotten. She will be fondly remembered by all who had the privilege to know her.

Private Funeral Arrangements

Community Funeral Home
www.communityfuneralhomes.com

As per the family's wishes, funeral arrangements are private. As an expression of sympathy, donations in Betty's memory can be made to a charity of your choice. Funeral Arrangements have been entrusted to the **HALIBURTON COMMUNITY FUNERAL HOME,** 13523 Hwy. #118, Haliburton, ON K0M 1S0 (705) 457-9209.

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THE HALIBURTON COUNTY
ECHO
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Healthcare projects get financial boost from governments

by MARTHA PERKINS
Editor

As everyone pins their hopes on a spring start to the construction of local healthcare facilities, the federal and provincial governments are making that optimism seem a little bit more like a healthy dose of realism.

On Wednesday, MP John O'Reilly and MPP Chris Hodgson announced that the local projects are approved for funding under the joint infrastructure program.

The federal and provincial governments will each pay one-third of the costs for a new 30-bed long-term care unit at Haliburton Hospital and an emergency wing and expanded accommodations at the Hyland Crest site, up to a certain dollar limit, of course.

When the application was made, the projects' projected costs were $13.7-million, and that's the figure approval was based on. This means the federal and provincial governments will each chip in $4.6-million, making for a total of $9.2-million in government funding. Local fundraising will have to pay for the rest, with the county agreeing to play an active role in insuring the money is available.

This is much better than the $6.4-million funding limit previously agreed to by the provincial government when the projects were first approved in 1994.

Of course, given that the province now has to pay $2-million less than it had to as the sole government funding source, this is welcome news for Queen's Park as well as Haliburton Highlands Health Services.

"The infrastructure funding

See FUNDING page 4

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LET'S DANCE: To the delight of hundreds of people in the audience, the Haliburton Figure Skating Club presented its annual skating carnival at the Dysart arena on Sunday afternoon. Here, Anna Schleifenbaum, Leanna Pearsell, Minna Schleifenbaum and Tamara Bain do the Mexican Hat Dance. More photos on page 21.

GETTING THE GOODS ON DOWNLOADING

MPP says Highlands spared from the worst

by MARTHA PERKINS
Editor

It could have been worse.

That was the main message MPP Chris Hodgson gave to local politicians who are worried about the economic impact of provincial downloading.

"Haliburton County was headed towards being grants negative," Hodgson told county council, plus 35 municipal representatives in the audience at Wednesday's county council meeting. In other words, if the province had cut its own deficit by cutting transfer payments to municipalities, in the same way the federal government solved its deficit problems by cutting payments to provinces, local municipalities would have been scrambling to cope with a loss of all provincial funding.

As it is now, Hodgson says the province made provisions to ensure that a projected $1.8-million loss of grants didn't materialize. Instead, local governments need to cut only $163,000 from their budgets in order to have funding stay at present levels. "That's a huge benefit."

It was very important for Hodgson to get the support of local politicians because the Tory government's Achilles heel when it comes to voter popularity is property taxes, which threaten to rise dramatically as a result of downloading.

"Politically we have put a lot of faith in municipal councils," Hodgson said. "We're putting our political future in your hands to keep costs down for taxpayers... Our intent is to have less government and less onerous taxes and there's no point in lowering income taxes if property taxes go up."

To a large part, Hodgson succeeded in getting local politicians on side; at the very least, there was no expressed hostility towards him or his government and the meeting ended on a cordial note. He used humour to break the ice and appeared serious in his intent to help local governments solve many of the problems downloading and the province-wide shift to Actual Value Assessment will create.

Speaking without notes or pauses for about half an hour,

See RURAL page 6

Education funding squabbles begin early

by PETER DOWNS
Staff Reporter

Queen's Park has had complete control of education's purse strings for less than a month and already it and the area's new school board are questioning each other's math.

Depending on whose figures you look at, the district school board for Haliburton County, Muskoka and Victoria County is either in for a relatively small but welcome increase in funding for the remainder of the school year or a relatively small but still significant decrease.

The province says it's giving the amalgamated board $1.5-million more than it was told it would receive from January 1 to August 31 — the so-called "stub year" prior to when the government's new funding model is to take effect.

But the school board maintains the $85.8-million in funding it's getting for the eight months is actually a decrease of about $582,000. And the board's take on the funding situation doesn't sit well with riding MPP and management board chair Chris Hodgson.

"They're wrong," he told the *Echo* Friday morning. "I don't know why they're playing games with this ... They got an increase."

But Al Ingram, the board's superintendent of finance, defends the board's accounting.

He said the discrepancy can

See BOARD page 4

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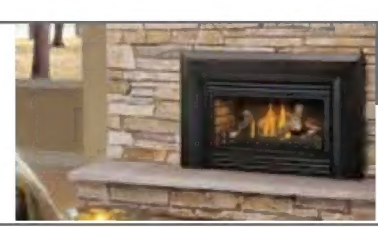

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